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AN ISSUE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

WHO is responsible, or may be expected to take responsibility, for social change for the better?

This is not a question on which there is general agreement. It is of course a broad and basic question, and therefore not often asked or answered, these days. This question compels the examination of basic assumptions, and the people of our time do not like to examine basic assumptions. After all, if we are mistaken in our basic assumptions, we are probably wrong in a great deal of what we believe and do, and this is an unpalatable idea. The excuse commonly made for ignoring or taking for granted basic assumptions is that they involve philosophic questions, and "everyone knows" that the attempt to settle philosophic questions is said to be a futile undertaking, so let us get on, we say, with the practical work of creating a better society, letting the philosophical chips fall where they will.

The short humanist answer to the question of who is responsible for social change is that *men* are responsible. This was the dramatic proclamation of Vico, made early in the eighteenth century. Very good, we may say, but *which* men?

The obvious answer is: The men who know best and are most responsible in behalf of all the rest.

Implicit in this answer is the idea that some men know better than others, which is already an assumption about human beings—that they are differentiated into various degrees of understanding and moral interest concerning the human situation and its improvement. How are the men with superior understanding and moral interest to be selected and endowed with the authority to do what they decide ought to be done?

An answer to this question in theoretical terms would require investigation of the entire problem of political philosophy. Let us look, therefore, at the answers which have been rendered by history. Three great events filled with momentous change for social arrangements should suffice: The French Revolution, the American Revolution, and the Russian Revolution.

It should be noted at the outset that the selection of these revolutions as test cases distorts the problem by seeming to assume that all social betterment depends upon the seizure of power. This assumption may be false. What has happened in the past may not be decisive in the future. In fact, the general feeling, today, that past action can no longer be taken as a model for the future, is what makes a discussion of this sort pertinent. Further, such men as Dostoievsky, Zola, Dickens, and Thoreau may be more important influences in the shaping of social change than the political architects who make revolutions and write constitutions. This idea, however, would involve us in greater subtleties than we can handle at the moment.

What, then, is the important criterion in making distinctions between the French, the American, and the Russian Revolutions? Looking back on these events, the value which seems decisive in judging them is the freedom which was established for individuals after the revolution was (relatively) complete. After all, the degree of freedom permitted to the people by those who achieve power is an index of the kind of men who obtain the power and institute the changes. (The circumstances of the revolution are of course modifying factors to be considered, but the value of freedom should remain supreme.)

For an account of what happened during and after the French Revolution, in relation to the ideal of freedom, we take a passage from an article by Bertrand de Jouvenal in *Bhoodan* for Jan. 23:

> Rousseau . . . felt that society could be regarded as an association in which individuals behaved as active partners only if the city were small enough. During the French Revolution, there was a strong tendency to break down the centralization which has been gradually instituted since Richelieu, and to build up France again as a pyramidal structure resting upon the "departments" and even the "communes." But these federalists were defeated and led to the scaffold by their opponents, who gave France a far more highly centralized structure than had been the case under the monarchy.
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> The fight for decentralization was renewed in the nineteenth century, by Proudhon, whose monumental works are entirely in praise of local democracy as opposed to the abstract model.
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> Indeed, throughout the first half of the nineteenth century the socialists stood in opposition to the economists; the two words were taken as contradictory, since the economist was solely interested in efficiency achieved by economies of scale, while the socialist was preoccupied with the fellowship obtaining in what are called "communities." It is Marx, of course, who turned the tide of socialism away from the federalist dream to the promise of great benefits as the aftermath of capitalist centralization.

In the perspective of history, and in consideration of the present problem of centralized power, all over the world, we should probably want to side with Rousseau and Proudhon, yet at the same time it must be admitted that the momentum of modern technological civilization is in the opposite direction—toward ever-increasing centralized power. The justifications for this tendency are twofold: efficiency and national security.

The American Revolution was less a work of rebellious passion than the French Revolution. In fact, a number of historians prefer to speak of the American War for Independence, on the ground that it was more this than a revolution. At any rate, the American Revolution did not deliver the new nation into the hands of a military dictator like Napoleon. The *Federalist Papers*, in which the general philosophy of American government is debated, constitute a sagacious treatise on human nature in relation to politics and freedom. It may be said that the Founding Fathers of the United States endeavored to establish a pragmatic and functional sort of aristocracy, incorporating both the democratic and the federal principles. Benjamin Franklin was the one who came to typify the opposition to the "aristocratic" element in the proposed constitution. As Abram L. Harris said in a *Harper's* article (November, 1937):

> [Franklin] pictured the country enjoying a long reign of peace and happiness under the regime of an equalitarian democracy of free holders and small property-owners. This theory of society was the only one in which he could have faith. His belief in such a society limited his intellectual horizon and caused him to underestimate the tempo of economic forces. But in steadfastly adhering to it to the end of his life he came nearer than any other father to advocating a "pure democracy." A government of checks and balances was repugnant to his conception of democracy. And, as representative at the Constitutional Convention, but one too old to exert much influence, he was unmoved by "aristocratic" opposition to his belief in an unrestricted manhood suffrage, annual parliaments, and a single-chamber legislature representing a democratic electorate.

Another passage from Mr. Harris enlarges the picture of the new-born American society:

> . . . viewed in its true historical light, the conflict between Hamilton and Jefferson will be seen as a struggle between small and large capitalists. That this conflict took the form of opposition of agrarianism to finance and commerce was inevitable because of the peculiar character of emerging capitalism. . . . Under these peculiarly American conditions the only conflict that could arise was the conflict between those who had acquired a little and those who had acquired a great deal. This conflict envisioned by the founding fathers was devoid of class consciousness. The participants were all common men, laborers who aspired to become capitalists, and capitalists who had been laborers.

One thing that may be said of the founders of the American Republic takes precedence over all other comment: they were men entirely committed to the constitutional process in obtaining decisions. No leading American of that day ever sought personal or arbitrary power. The sole

power was to belong to impersonal authority, its exercise regulated by law.

It is a question, however, what men of the calibre of the Founding Fathers would think about the problem of power, today. The primary role of power is no longer to regulate the struggle "between small and large capitalists." That role continues, of course, but naked power itself has become so threatening a factor that the issues of modern life are rapidly being redefined in the terms of problems set by the magnitude of nuclear power. The old political problems, including the problem of freedom, exist only as they are seen in the glaring light of nuclear weapons.

The Russian Revolution took place at a time when freedom could hardly be valued, since it had been hardly experienced, and among a people who, worn down by war, were responsive chiefly to the vocabulary of power. The high intentions of the Bolshevik revolution were soon identified with the possession and maintenance of power by the ruling party, and in the some thirty years since the Soviet Government has relaxed only a little its almost absolute power over the people.

It is quite possible that the Russian dictatorship would have given way to a more democratic form of government, had it not been for the superseding problem of nuclear war which, by replacing the old problems of government, is now making the two World Powers, Russia and the United States, resemble one another more and more, despite the enormous difference in their political origins. A phase of this growing similarity is described by Charles E. Osgood, of the University of Illinois, in the April *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*:

> Many recent travelers to Russia, including statesmen and scholars, have been impressed by the "mirror image" of our attitudes that they find among the people and leaders there. "Why do you Americans want war?" our informal ambassadors are asked. And when they answer that we most certainly do not want war, the Russians ask, "Then why do your leaders prepare for war? Why do they ring us about with missile bases?" When our travelers ask them why they maintain an army and are building up nuclear weapons for long-range attack, they reply, of course, that we leave them no choice. I believe that we must accept these protestations of good faith as genuine. They blame their aggressive behavior on us just as we blame ours on them.
>
> I'm sure that it would be unrealistic to completely discount real differences between the Russians and ourselves—for example, those concerning the value of the individual which stem from our ideological conflict. But I am equally sure that this Bogey has been overdrawn in the workings of our own mental dynamics—particularly by those who fail to draw any distinction between Russian Communism and German Nazism.

Mr. Harris has another paragraph which brings us back to the question with which we started out: Who is responsible, or may be expected to take responsibility, for social change? While he is not speaking precisely of social change, it amounts to almost the same thing in a period when all "realistic" forms of political thought give way to the absolute requirements of military policy. Mr. Harris writes:

> Most of the discussion of policy in a nuclear age has been framed in technological terms and carried on more by physicists and engineers than by social scientists. But nuclear technology merely exaggerates the problem; it neither explains our difficulties nor offers any real solutions. In the last analysis, it is certainly true that today we are plagued with problems of human nature and human relationships. Our understanding and control of the physical world has far outstripped our understanding of and ability to control ourselves. The present generation is faced with the consequence of this unbalance.

It would seem the utmost folly to entrust the future to men of this sort. Yet it is natural that they are now in charge. If, after all, we acknowledge the one great issue to be the issue of power, then why not turn all our planning over to the specialists in power?

A letter to the editor in the same issue of the *Bulletin* adds other dimensions to the question. The writer is Hans Zeisel, of the University of Chicago Law School:

> I shall not easily forget a conversation I had with an eminent theologian some time after Hiroshima. I asked him what his church had to say about the use of the bomb. He answered that a resolution had been prepared, suggesting that the bomb be used only as a defensive weapon against threatening atomic attack. I could not help remarking that this sounded very statesmanlike but somehow lacked the simplicity of a religious position. The good theologian replied, "I know, but we were told on high government authority, that any other position would give undesirable encouragement to the Russians."
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> The formula that we would not drop the bomb unless someone else were about to use it against us, seemed decent enough until one realized that we had forfeited our right to such a statement by *having* dropped it twice, certain that nobody else even had one. . . .
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> Our present situation is fraught with moral danger, yet the churches, filled as they are said to be, remain statesmanlike and permit us to be taken in by the realists. Not long ago, I sat spellbound through a six-hour lecture on the strategic game-situation between us and the Russians. There it was inexorably proved that in terms of the "game" both the Russians *and* we had made a mistake somewhere by not having started long ago a preventive atomic attack. Now, the speaker almost regretfully conceded, it was too late for such an advantageous move. The insanity of such discourse is matched only by the insensibility that it makes possible.

Now comes a paragraph of peculiar significance:

> It would seem though that the common citizen knows better. His spontaneous and deep response to the administration's efforts of making peace; his being satisfied that we need not increase our arms budget although militarily speaking we probably should; his almost puzzling neglect of the very elements of civil defense; all, it seems to me, are signs not of a lack of realistic appreciation of the dangers, but of a basic commitment which senses that our fate hinges more on the resolution of a moral decision than on the ultimate superiority of arms. And since this moral problem, moreover, in the form of unilateral disarmament, might even become a practical issue, it would seem high time for a morality debate.

If Mr. Zeisel is right, and we think he is, then what future we have left is in the hands of a vague, popular intuition.

It is not too much to say that the over-riding issue of power has sterilized the modern mind. We still love our freedom, but now it seems that not only the bad guys, but the good guys, too, are working against it, so where are men to look for a leadership that can honestly stand for freedom?

We should like to frame this question with some quotations—several from Jayaprakash Narayan, the Indian Bhoodan and former socialist leader, and one from the American diplomat, George P. Kennan. Taken together, these quotations present a dilemma, yet so far as we can see, they record facts which will have to be the primary concern of any man or group attempting to undertake plans for a new or regenerated human society. Following are the quotations from Jayaprakash Narayan (taken from articles in *Bhoodan* for Jan. 16 and Jan. 23):

> The problem of democracy is basically, and above all, a moral problem. Constitutions, systems of government, parties, elections—all these are relevant to the business of democracy. But unless the moral and spiritual qualities of the people are appropriate, the best of constitutions and political systems will not make democracy work.
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> The moral qualities and mental attitudes most needed for democracy are: (1) concern for truth; (2) aversion to violence; (3) love of liberty and courage to resist oppression and tyranny; (4) spirit of cooperation; (5) preparedness to adjust self-interest to the larger interest; (6) respect for others' opinions and tolerance; (7) readiness to take responsibility; (8) belief in the fundamental equality of man; (9) faith in the educability of human nature.
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> These qualities and attitudes are not inborn in man. But he can be educated in them and trained to acquire and practice them. This task, let it be emphasized, is beyond the scope of the State. The quality of the life of society should itself be such that it inculcates these values in its members. The prevailing social ethics, the family, the religious and educational authorities and institutions, the example that the *élite* set in their own lives, the organs of public opinion—all these have to combine to create

> the necessary moral climate for democracy to thrive. Thus, it should be clear that the task of preparing the very soil in which the plant of democracy may take root and grow is not a political but an educative task. . . . .
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> The present is par excellence a materialistic age; and whether it is capitalism, socialism or communism it is the material values that overshadow all other values of life. Man is a mixture of matter and spirit—to use these words in their popular sense—and every man has material needs that have to be satisfied. In that sense every man cannot help but be a materialist. But if the material needs ever become unlimited and the overriding activity of mankind becomes an unending endeavor to satisfy the insatiable hunger for more and yet more, there is an imbalance established in human affairs and life becomes wholly materialistic. . . . it seems patent to me that democracy cannot coexist with the insatiable hunger for more and more material goods that modern industrialism—capitalist, socialist or communist—has created. I believe that for man really to enjoy liberty and freedom and to practice self-government, it is necessary voluntarily to limit his wants.
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> Otherwise, the greed for more and yet more will lead to mutual conflict, coercion, spoliation, war; and also a system of production that will be so complex as to bind democracy hand and foot and deliver it to a bureaucratic oligarchy. . . .

The quotation from George Kennan is from his *Realities of American Foreign Policy.* While it is printed here out of context, its validity seems undeniable in any context:

> Wherever the authority of the past is too suddenly and too drastically undermined—wherever the past ceases to be the great and reliable reference book of human problems—wherever, above all, the experience of the father becomes irrelevant to the trials and searchings of the son—there the foundations of man's inner health and stability begin to crumble. Insecurity and panic begin to take over, conduct becomes erratic and aggressive. A great portion of our globe is today thus affected.

Today, the "authority of the past" is severely shaken, if not destroyed, by the fruits of the past. The world is confronted, not so much by a dilemma as by a total *impasse.* So, perhaps we are in for more and not less of the confusion anticipated by Mr. Kennan as arising from a break with the past. How can we do anything *but* break with the past? Jayaprakash Narayan's analysis proposes the sort of break with the past which may seen alien to us, yet it has a continuous presence in Western tradition, starting with the second book of Plato's *Republic.* The thing our technological and material progress now makes us realize is that a compromise arrangement is hardly possible. But who will take the responsibility for attempting to institute the *radical* changes that seem to be necessary?

Letter from
WARSAW

WARSAW.—Just arrived from Moscow, I find Warsaw a somewhat easy-going place. Colleagues who know Poland better have often told me this, but the idea develops reality only from personal experience. There is a sort of sloppiness about building projects, service in the stores, and the appearance of the streets, which argues that there is no such discipline in Warsaw as that Moscow lives by. Coming from the airport in the bus, we found no taxi in sight at the air-terminal. Without hesitation the driver loaded two of us, a Pole and myself, back into the bus and took the fifty-seat behemoth off across town to deliver us to our destinations. This couldn't have happened in Moscow, nor, for that matter, in New York, although in Moscow there would have been a taxi in sight, and probably in New York.

Yet a fairly senior worker in a major Government cultural enterprise told me of the heroic labors of clerks, executives—literally every able-bodied person—when after the war they gave evenings and weekends to the hard, unpaid physical labor of sorting over the rubble of Warsaw to reclaim bricks for new building. Easy-going? Perhaps; but the spirit of the Poles is a magnificent characteristic.

One Pole told me that whenever two Poles gather there will be a rumor, when three meet there will be an argument, but if four work together there will be a cultural exchange program. While serious enough, the Poles have a way of making fun of their troubles, and of sententious doctrines and pompous people.

This matter of deciding when something is serious is only one of the confusions which confront a visitor to Warsaw. Another is the prices. I have a single room with a bath in the newest and best hotel in town for Z1 (Zloty) 100 or roughly, $4.00 per night. However, a full meal in the cheaper of the hotel's restaurants would set me back at least $3.20, plus tips and drinks, if any. (The bourgeois habit of the tip, not uniform in Moscow, is firmly established here.) On the street very poor apples are for sale at Z1 14, or 56 cents a kilo; in some stores passable oranges retail at $1.60 per kilo. Pall Mall cigarettes sell in State and private stores at $1.20 per pack, and the universal price for a small tin of Nescafé is Z1 95, or $3.80. On the street a new Volga taxicab (Polish version of a Russian car) starts its meter at I6 cents and carries me to an appointment well across town for 28 cents.

I suspect that behind these apparent anomalies lie some interesting economic and political explanations. It is clear, for instance, that for reasons of revenue or control, or both, the Government lays a very heavy hand upon certain items such as liquor, coffee and chocolate.

But a "mixed" Socialist economy is bound to be confusing to those used to a different system. One night I had dinner—incidentally much the best food I enjoyed in Warsaw—at a restaurant described as a cooperative. Questioning a bit, I was told that it was formed by a group of invalids, some thousands in number, who obtained their charter and their financing from the Ministry of Commerce, and devoted their profit to the maintenance of their members. The "cooperative" explanation seems obscure and one wonders what the real stimulus was. Did an old-time restaurant operator, faced with a managed economy, see this way to continue his activities? Perhaps the Government encouraged the enterprise as a way of obtaining economic variety. Such operations are said to be fairly widespread.

In a long conversation with a responsible Pole, not directly in the Government service but a full supporter of the regime, the extent of Poland's search for a new economic way of life became clear. The alternations in Polish life between firm control and relaxation are a function of the Polish character, of relations with neighbors (not always good neighbors), of the fact that Poland is basically poor, and of this search for new ways—a

search in which some very large mistakes have been made.

Poles are fully aware, my friend said, of the necessity for solving the basic problems of both agriculture and industrialization. Though related in the end, these two problems must have very different treatment, the one requiring basic adjustments at home, and the other involving major adjustments in the international Socialist world.

In agriculture, Socialist Poland began, as did Russia, with a bold program of forcing the peasants into collectives, hoping to improve production and to employ the resulting gains in forced industrialization. But the peasants resisted. In spite of all pressures, their production fell. The meaning of the events of October, 1956, was that the Polish people rejected these pressures and methods. Then it was decided that the peasants, released from collectivization and forced production for the State, would spontaneously increase production on their own. But since 1956 it has become clear that this is not happening. Production remains sufficient to feed the peasants, but not the rest of the population, and grain is being imported.

Well, if neither system works, what then? There are now State farms totaling 7 per cent of the agricultural areas, and collectives of an equal amount. My friend says the Polish people will never again tolerate coercion and no Government will have the heart to try it. But a concentrated attempt to improve methods, to mechanize, to demonstrate possibilities, based upon the State farms and existing collectives, to which adequate advice, capitalization and mechanization would be provided, could show the way out. This is not, he says, the present Government policy, but he thinks it is coming.

If the picture is gloomy in agriculture, it is not much less so in industry. Very much aware that there are two possible roads to follow, the Poles are firmly planted upon neither. Lacking the ruthlessness required for the forced industrialization once practiced by the U.S.S.R. and now by the Chinese, the Poles are unable, on the other hand, to follow the more moderate Indian lead. As for the arrangements by which Socialist States have worked out an international division of labor, my friend said they exist largely on paper, and anyway are very disadvantageous to the Poles, who were cast in the role of raw-material producer (for instance, of coal), expected to export to their more sophisticated neighbors. In short, a colonial relationship was refused by the Poles, and they are now as a result a bit too much on their own.

This report may be far too simplified, but it illustrates dilemmas which might well terrify any people. Yet I have an impression that the Poles are not terrified, that things are better here than a year ago, when I was last in Warsaw. I hope it isn't only because the cheerfulness and friendliness of the Poles make one want to think things are better for them. Can they develop a successful Socialist society without more of the iron of discipline so apparent in some of their neighbors?

ROVING CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
OF PLANTS AND MEN

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH'S *The Gardener's World* (G. P. Putnam, 1960; 460 pages, $8.95) is a result of the editor's philosophical interest in the intimacy which men are able to feel concerning the plants and flowers they grow with no eye to profit. The concluding paragraphs of the general introduction concern the relationship between creative men and the plants they have cultivated:

> Beauty may be its own excuse for being, but if so that is a truth we are loath to accept and we are prone to seek at least supporting justifications whenever we are moved to pursue beauty. Nor is the modern who likes to think that he has got rid of his sense of sin much more likely to have an easy conscience. Ask him why he gardens and he is not very likely to say, "In order to contemplate the Creator as manifest in His creations"; but he is likely enough to reply, "Wonderful exercise, you know; keeps me fit; makes me work better at the office on Monday." And it is not evident that this is a sounder or, in any event, a nobler reason.
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> But does the gardener really need any excuse at all? Is the beautiful the good only because it supports the utilitarian, or is the utilitarian good only because it makes possible the cultivation of the beautiful?
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> John Ruskin once infuriated Asa Gray, the leading botanist of his time, by the dogmatic statement that the botanists did not know what they were talking about—as, for instance, when they explained that the purpose of a flower is the production of a seed. The truth is, said Ruskin, the other way around. The purpose of a seed is the production of a flower.
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> In a sense, of course, both were right. Nature's "purpose" in creating a flower is the continuation of the species through the production of a seed. But man's purpose when he gathers a seed is to get, in the end, a flower; and the greatest achievement of the human being has been just that he can have such a purpose, that he can, that is to say, value something *as an end in itself*, not merely as a means by which life, human or plant, may be enabled to continue. To the gardener at least Ruskin was more right than Gray and the gardener would be wise to admit the fact. He gardens to produce gardens and flowers, not seeds, because beauty is indeed its own excuse for being.

Mr. Krutch does not labor the point that men who quietly study the ways of "nature" in the plant kingdom are apt to discover a good deal about themselves. If, as Mr. Krutch has elsewhere suggested, men, plants and animals bear many sorts of interrelationship in "a great chain of being," and if meditative solitude is a retort for the distillation of wisdom, man's liking for the cultivation of plants is particularly adaptable to the contemplative urge. The selections from Thoreau in *The Gardener's World*, for example, indicate that this ancestral American made no distinction between his feeling for plants and his feeling for ethical and metaphysical abstractions. Because Thoreau saw every form of life as interpenetrating other forms, he *felt* the presence of Leibnitz' "monads" wherever life manifested.

There is, of course, a clear scientific basis for explaining the fascination which so many men have felt for plants: the whole of animal creation has been from the beginning of time dependent upon the green of chlorophyll, which, as Krutch reminds us, "alone has the power of transforming the mere mineral elements present in the earth's crust into food capable of nourishing any form of animal life." And there is metaphysical analogy: both Virgil and Thoreau were poetic farmers; it was their capacity for poetry that enabled them to sense that the reciprocal relationship between man and plants was something more than biological dependence, a kind of perception, perhaps, which leads some men to "gardening." As Mr. Krutch says:

> When man is surrounded on all sides by wild nature and when his cities, towns and houses are but islands of artificiality and order painfully wrested from nature, then he wants his garden to be as artificial (or perhaps one should say as artful) as possible, and by its artificiality to call attention to the fact that it is indeed man-made. When populations grow, cities spread, and nature not modified by man becomes rarer and rarer, then he is likely, on the other hand, to be oppressed by too much regularity, to find geometrical arrangements stiff, and to seek for

some compromise under which nature is to some extent tamed but not entirely subdued.

The publisher's description of *The Gardener's World* notes the uniqueness of Dr. Krutch's selections, providing in one volume examples of the finest writing on both plant lore and gardening:

> One hundred and twenty-eight selections by 103 authors, spanning the whole of literature and covering virtually every aspect of man in nature and man, the gardener. Here, for instance, are the stories of Fashions in Gardening through the ages, of Plant Exploration, of Myths, Fantasies and Hoaxes—all told by the great writers of history: Addison, Johnson, Melville, Lewis Carroll, H. G. Wells, Colette, and many others. Here too are the modern nature and gardening writers on a variety of subjects—Richardson Wright, Edwin Way Teale, Donald Culross Peattie, Lewis Gannett, Peter Freuchen, and Mr. Krutch himself. All are carefully introduced by Mr. Krutch's notes, which precede each selection in the text.

The thread that binds all this together is clearly the sort of "exploration" with which readers of Mr. Krutch have become appreciatively familiar. In an earlier work, he spoke of himself as a sort of "amateur botanist," but the word "amateur" is applicable only in the sense that classification and microscopic study never thrust themselves forward in an academic way. It is possible that some botanists and ecologists know "more" about the plants of the desert than Mr. Krutch, but we find it impossible to believe that anyone knows better what to do with such knowledge. Always the real theme is "the great chain of being"—the story of the fascinating interpenetrations and mutual dependencies which reflect the vision of natural law, under which all forms of life strive for their own individual expression. Even in the more prosaic selections in *The Gardener's World,* one is easily led to believe that no man who develops a friendly feeling toward plants and animals in their natural habitat will fail to be a better, more understanding, more useful human being by reason of this sympathy.

COMMENTARY
OUR ENEMIES' KEEPERS?

A PAPER by Margaret Mead, Columbia University anthropologist, proposes that the crisis of the present is such that the time has come for "absolutely new inventions." The paper is titled "The Significance of the Individual" and the extract quoted below is from *What's New* (Abbott Laboratories house organ, No. 215). Speaking of the rises and falls of various civilizations of the past, Prof. Mead writes:

> . . . we may take what we know now about how changes come about, how and in what ways human beings have taken thought, and how the present situation of mankind differs from the past, and set to work creating the necessary intellectual and moral climate for the solution of the problems that face us. . . . As long as all human societies did not form an interconnecting web which could be destroyed at one blow, warfare, however cruel and wasteful of individual lives, nevertheless was an agent of progress. In the course of long history when warfare favored the survival of successive civilizations, men made a large number of important inventions through which a group of individuals could be kept loyal and devoted to one another, to the land of their fathers and the altars of their gods, to a tradition of glory and to a hope of future for their children. . . The mechanisms have been very similar. Men were reared to believe that their own group was more valuable than other peoples' groups, that only by defending it could they ensure a proper way of life for their children. Protection of one's own against the stranger was the mechanism, whether one's own were numbered in the hundreds or the millions, whether the forts of the enemy could be seen on the next hill or whether they lived thousands of miles away. Slowly through history, we have invented ways of extending our own group to include more of the human race. Most of the inventions that have been made are ways of keeping people together who have never met and never will meet, but who yet define each other as fellow members of some groups to which absolute devotion can be given.
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> But the nature of the enemy has not changed. So far we have never been able to redefine the enemy as differing in any appreciable way from the member of the next tribe whom our remote ancestors counted it virtue to kill. So we stand today on the edge of a war of possible annihilation, without any built-in, tried devices for the incorporation of the enemy into our protective system. We have made a few inventions: The League of Nations and the United Nations, the idea of peace and a separate ethic in peacetime, the idea of World Law; but none of these are yet underwritten by culture which can extend men's capacity to protect each other into a capacity to protect the enemy. And we have become, in grim reality, our enemies' keepers, as well as our brothers' keepers. Any dependence upon mankind's muddling through, on the theory that the human race has survived so far, is unjustified, because no portion of the human race has ever known how to survive in the face of greater power—and now the whole human race is endangered at once. . . .

The "invention" now required is one that has some hope of incorporating "the enemy" into our protective system. This calls for a new kind of inventive genius!

It needs to be recognized, however, that such inventiveness is considerably more than a technological talent. The originality Prof. Mead speaks of will arise from a ground of moral sensibility, and will be possible only as large numbers of people recognize the necessity for radical change in human attitudes toward so-called "enemies." As Prof. Mead concludes:

> Our future depends . . . on developing, with the help of prophets and poets who have yet to raise their voices, underwritten by the sciences of human behavior, a new conception of the individual in which each seeks fulfillment not in breeding replicas of himself and herself, but in the nurturance of human children, wherever they are, and the realization of what each individual can contribute individually to a world that desperately needs every ounce of creativity we can free for productive thought and social action.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

"TENSIONS OUR CHILDREN LIVE WITH"

DOROTHY SPOERL'S new volume of this title (Beacon Press, 1959) reaches us in time to provide a sequel to last week's discussion of Erik Erikson's "life cycle" theory. While Erikson is primarily concerned with developing a theoretical framework for typical psychological crises in child development, Dr. Spoerl deals with specific situations which younger children of school age encounter in puzzlement: the new boy who moves into the block, the discovery by children that their parents profess allegiance to different political parties, the issue of race prejudice—all material which a thoughtful teacher can use.

Here are fifty-three stories of children facing situations of moderate tension, involving the schoolroom, the playground, and standards of right and wrong in various departments. Dr. Spoerl, who recently resigned as Chairman of the Psychology Department at American International College, Springfield, Mass., in order to teach in a rural elementary school, has used these stories as a basis of classroom discussion, and now passes them on as a source of possible help to other teachers.

The stories are notably good in one respect: free of conventional moralizing, they aim at setting a problem rather than solving it. Several are "open-ended"—that is, no particular solution is provided by the author, and it is this approach which usually best serves to provoke discussion:

> Sometimes children find it difficult to accept the idea that there are a number of right ways to handle a single situation. If one occasionally tells an open-ended story, giving the child an opportunity to finish it, or if one occasionally asks for a new ending from each child, this will certainly show the group that there are as many solutions as there are individuals. Subsequent discussion will show that there is often no single "right" or "wrong" way to handle the situation.
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> This is a basic understanding that is of great value to children. It frees them from overdependence on adult values and standards and helps them to see that there are a wide variety of ways in which to look at almost any problem. It is important that children do not develop the idea that they have found *the* way to behave, and that they not feel that theirs is the *only* way.

Dr. Spoerl often found that a less inhibited response can be elicited by asking the children to furnish an ending to the story in writing. With eager children, on the other hand, it may be that their hands will go up for comment and criticism of the attitudes and behavior of the characters in the story before it has reached its climax. Dr. Spoerl suggests specific situations in which the stories may serve:

> Stories of this type may fit into your program when a problem exists which has not come out into the open, or when you want to avoid the personal issues that otherwise would be involved. Many times a teacher is aware of an undercurrent of misunderstanding or lack of sympathy existing among the children in a class. Perhaps she has had reported to her instances of misunderstanding, segregation of other children for reasons of race, religion, etc., or has heard comments from the children about situations similar to those discussed in this book. Although, when possible, the real life situation is basically better for discussion purposes, it is not desirable to start by saying, "I understand that Jimmy is refusing to play with the little Jewish boy who has just moved into his neighborhood," or, "I see that you do not understand why Janie's father is out on strike." In this kind of situation, the introduction of a story may make possible the desired discussion, and, more important, will sometimes bring the child in question to the point where he may be able to say, "Oh, I didn't realize it, but that is just what I have been doing."
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> Or [you may use a story] when you feel that the class has not developed the kind of "social conscience" that children should have. Many children have had so little experience with the way other people live that they have no basis for understanding or for the development of sympathy. Here again the discussion of these stories will help. A social conscience does not develop in a vacuum, and when the problems do not actually exist within the child's experience, their presentation in story form can often make the children aware of problems they would not meet otherwise. Above all, we want to

> avoid in our children the development of glib platitudes and to help them think through their ideas and feelings on these problems. Otherwise we cannot hope to build a generation of socially aware liberals.

Dr. Spoerl suggests that the pre-class gossip of the children gathering in the classroom often provides an indication of a need for discussion and wider understanding. There may be a strike in town, a child of divorced parents may have just entered school, a handicapped youngster is about to enter the class, or a family of different ethnic origin may have moved into the neighborhood. The children often make casual comments on these subjects which allow the unobtrusive teacher to say, "I know of a story that tells about some people who had just that kind of problem. Would you like me to read it to you so that we can talk about it?" The underlying psychology is obviously beneficial—an opportunity to bring half-formed opinions and prejudices out into the open *without* tension, thus encouraging a basically necessary appreciation of democracy—that one can always improve one's viewpoint by striving to comprehend the differing opinions and reactions of others.

As Dr. Spoerl notes, there really is no "age level" for any given story. Some of the stories were intended for children as young as third-graders and some were written for junior high school students, but frequently an adult discussion group will benefit equally from this easy and natural way of raising controversial issues.

FRONTIERS

The Work of Man

A SOUTH AMERICAN reader finds reason to object to a paragraph in the article on the MANAS "Editorial Faith" in the Feb. 10 issue. The paragraph read as follows:

> What is the work of man? Essentially, it relates to comprehension and participation in the *whole* of what is going on in the universe. Man will be afflicted with unrest so long as he remains unable to comprehend the universal processes and universal ends. There is an irresistible drive for unity in his thought. He needs to understand in what way the universe is one and in what way it is many.

Arguing for a more modest view of the human enterprise, this reader suggests that "we live in a universe known to be so vast as to preclude human contact with each and every part of it," adding that "it is even more pretentious to suppose that what the human mind can accept as supreme for its own purposes is also the ultimately supreme fact of the entire universe."

What, then, shall we choose as the agent of our understanding, since we can hardly do without a principle of this sort? Our reader proposes the notion of "value"—not this or that particular value, but *value* as such.

> Is not [he asks] valuation perhaps a basic principle at work in the universe? If so, are we not consciously participating in at least one aspect of the cosmic process, whatever the level, intensity or degree of integrity of our individual awareness? If so, is not the cosmos also giving rise to ever more integrated, though always experimental structures, in partial conflict with each other until reconciled?

We can find no important difference with this reader. After all, if we had to put into words what we think is going on in the universe, as a *whole*, we should probably say, *the realization of value.* Our correspondent makes the question more specific:

> How does a structure of values become a system attaining, or maintaining, coherent integrity? How can two or several value systems, independently arrived at, and perhaps differently structured, coexist, be reconciled, or possibly be integrated into a more embracing, more harmonious system, possessing even greater integrity?

With these questions, our reader seems to have given an account of the essential processes and ends of man's life. A child is a value system seeking integrity or wholeness. Growing up means a series of encounters with other, larger and more complicated value systems, with which the child must learn to relate, accepting the good value systems into his own "universe," rejecting the bad ones, and proceeding in this work throughout life.

The religious or philosophic quest may without difficulty be called the search for the meaning or "value" of "the ultimately supreme fact of the entire universe." Why should we say that this longing is "pretentious" for the human mind? The human mind is not a negligible factor in the universe. It may be made of exactly the same stuff as the essential stuff of the universe. Its essential processes may be exact duplicates of the essential processes of the universe.

But, it may be asked, does not the human mind encounter more frustrations than successes? Perhaps so. It would be easier to speak of such things if we had some "norm" to compare the workings of our minds with. But the only thing we can compare our minds with is another mind. And any conceivable mind for this purpose will be a mind that moves from the unknown to the known, just as ours does. There may be an *absolute* mind, which does no work, but simply knows all; in this case, however, comparisons are both inappropriate and impossible.

Besides, we are talking about the universe, not an absolute principle behind the universe. We could argue that the entire process of evolution is made up of encounters with limitation and the overcoming of them. If this is so, then the similar role and characteristics of the human mind are precisely what entitle us to think that we are capable of knowledge about the entire universe.

If this knowledge is not already potential within us, then we can never get it, nor can we possibly explain the virtually universal human longing for and pursuit of such knowledge.

We do not mean to suggest that there is no ground of ultimate reality which is beyond intellectual cognition. An omnipresent Self or Deity, eternally undivided, unspent, cannot be an object of any sort of particularized perception. But the active, evolving image of the One Self—called *Logos* in philosophy, the *Son* in theology—creates the spectacle of existence, of which we are the observers and of which we are also a part.

So man, we might argue, has need to be a Monist by reason of his identity in Self with the undistributed Highest; and as a moral being seeking the good, he has need to be a dualist, since his life is primarily a series of decisions between good and evil; and finally, he must be a pluralist since he is obviously involved with countless multitudes of other atoms or monads or individual selves, each on a pilgrimage similar to his own, each presenting an authentic facet of the comprehensible reality of existing things.

Our reader has a paragraph not unrelated to these suggestions:

> We are a mere particle of the universe, here for a day only, though possibly also for a purpose of a kind that we can scarcely hope to understand. It may be intuitively acceptable, and actually helpful, to regard ourselves as instruments in a cosmic process, identical in nature with the process itself, and aided in our ephemeral task from sources some of which we can identify and even control, while others we may "sense" in ways difficult to verify, or even fail to sense altogether. This view, furthermore, is to be held with the proviso that it may be truer with respect to those parts of the cosmic process that lie closely within our range, than with other parts which are remote; and again, that we cannot know the boundary where this still holds true and beyond which it does not. Perhaps, beyond our clear control and grasp, ripples of the effects of our action travel further outward, into the unknown.

These thoughts are in a familiar mood, although they are indeed wondrous thoughts for a "mere particle"! Actually, to be a "mere particle of the universe" may be to be something very great. We should add that every setting of a limit, even in hypothesis, when turned about, becomes a declaration of understanding of that limit, and a presumption of a possible passage beyond it—sometime, somehow, in a limitless universe promising limitless growth.